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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1994-1995 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1996

PART IV. THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN

Section 3 - Mexico

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.95-02221

MEXICO

Gulf of Mexico
Merida
Cancun
State of Yucatan
Campeche
State of Quintana Roo
Quetzal-Edzna
Las Laureles
Kuchumatan
La Laguna
Keste
Maya Tecun
Maya Balam
Los Lirios
MEXICO
Chetumal
State of Tabasco
State of Campeche
Palenque
BELIZE
State of Chiapas
Caribbean Sea
Comitán
GUATEMALA
The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations
HONDURAS
0
200
Km.
City
Refugee settlement
Area of refugee camps
UNHCR Office

IV.3 MEXICO

1. Beneficiary population

1. At 31 December 1994, Mexico hosted some 47,400 recognized refugees, almost all of whom are assisted by UNHCR. Most are Guatemalans situated in settlements and camps (Campeche, Chiapas, Quintana Roo) with some Salvadorans and other nationalities living in Mexico City. Of the Guatemalan refugee children living in the states of Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo, 48 per cent were born in Mexico.

2. An estimated 340,000 externally displaced persons and unrecognized refugees who are not being assisted by UNHCR continue to live in Mexico.

2. Developments in 1994 and 1995

3. The overall refugee population decreased considerably between January 1994 and the end of April 1995 as a result of voluntary repatriation, mainly of Guatemalan refugees who were settled in Quintana Roo and Campeche, as well as Chiapas. A total of 5,971 Guatemalan refugees repatriated voluntarily during 1994. An additional 4,764, or some 80 per cent of the 1994 figure, have already repatriated between January and the end of April 1995.

4. Support and assistance activities commenced in 1994 will be maintained in 1995 to prepare refugees for their eventual repatriation. Priority will continue to be given to gender-related activities through the consolidation of projects managed by women and of activities benefiting women so as to enhance their productive role among refugee and local communities. In addition to facilitating the issuance of documentation and providing logistical support, the thrust as from mid-1995 onward will be to intensify on-the-job skills training in micro-entrepreneurship and credit management and in self-supporting care and maintenance activities. This reorientation of activities aims to optimize the refugees' potential to be productive members of their country of asylum and eventually in their country of origin.

5. In June 1994, the Mexican Government hosted the closing ceremony of CIREFCA (International Conference on Central American Refugees) which included the following convening countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Belize. The ceremony was well attended by members of the donor and international community.

6. During 1994, more than 125 trips were supported by UNHCR for Guatemalan refugee representatives to visit their villages of destination prior to their groups' planned repatriation movement. During these trips, refugee representatives generally explore arrangements for the purchase of land or farms, or for the recovery of refugee-owned land. During 1995, UNHCR will continue to promote and support the visits of refugees to their villages of destination since these activities have proved to be invaluable for heightening interest in voluntary repatriation.

7. The outbreak of violence in Chiapas in January 1994 displaced Mexican peasants, particularly those living in rural areas, and seriously affected refugees in the State especially those in the Margaritas area, where some 70 refugee camps are located. Some refugees living on land owned by the Catholic Church have been directly affected by occupations by the displaced Mexican peasants. Fortunately, thanks to a willingness on all sides to find a solution and the timely intervention on the part of the Mexican Commission for Assistance to Refugees (COMAR), untoward incidents have been avoided. Due to continuing tensions in the State, refugees have been advised to refrain from leaving the camps. This limited mobility is of concern since 60 per cent of the refugees in Mexico are in Chiapas and this affects their income-generation possibilities.

8. In the Campeche and Quintana Roo Guatemalan refugee settlements, infrastructure activities mainly in water and electricity, initiated in previous years, are expected to be finalized by the end of 1995. These facilities will be handed over at an appropriate time to the relevant government institutions in the respective States. In early 1995, the Los Lirios camp in the State of Quintana Roo was closed following the voluntary repatriation of its last Guatemalan refugee residents.

9. During 1995, the UNHCR assistance programme in Mexico is being reviewed to take account of inflation and exchange rate changes, as well as changes to be introduced in programme direction.

3. 1996 country programme

(a) Objectives

(i) Guatemalan refugees

10. Promotion and preparatory activities for voluntary repatriation of refugees from the States of Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo will continue during 1996. Based on the number of organized groups and on previous year's trends a planning figure of 8,000 Guatemalan returnees is foreseen for 1996.

11. The overall objective will be to continue to support and assist those refugees who opt for voluntary repatriation. Pending voluntary repatriation or another appropriate durable solution, the basic care and maintenance assistance programme will continue in Chiapas during 1996 to assist both those awaiting voluntary repatriation, and those who still opt to remain in Mexico and who have not yet achieved self-sufficiency. Efforts will focus on motivating and supporting refugee initiatives towards self-help and self-supporting activities. On-the-job skills training, technical guidance and support are some of the essential components in the shift of the methodology from individual assistance to a community-based approach which would benefit clusters of families. This approach aims to enable and empower Guatemalan refugees to assume their day-to-day responsibilities and be productive and self-supporting members of their communities.

12. WFP has announced its intention to terminate its emergency project in favour of refugees in Chiapas after February 1996. Alternatives to ensure that basic food needs of the refugees are met will have to be identified and worked out between the Mexican authorities and WFP.

13. The consolidation of the achievements towards refugee self-sufficiency in Campeche and Quintana Roo under the multi-year programme (1989-1992) will continue. Negotiations with the relevant national institutions will also continue in order to meet the criteria for the eventual transfer of responsibilities for the facilities under the health, sanitation, education, water and infrastructure sectors.

(ii) Urban refugees

14. The reorientation of the assistance, initiated during 1995, will continue in 1996 for a small but still significant number of urban refugees. The reorientation will lead to greater independence and integration of the urban refugees by promoting refugee training and counselling the beneficiaries on the use of the existing infrastructure and facilities. Programmes will support individual repatriation for those wishing to return to their country of origin.

15. Discussions with the Mexican Government on the legal status of refugees will continue.

(b) Proposed budgets for 1996

16. It should be noted that Trust Fund projects implemented during 1995 have been transferred to General Programmes for the year 1996.

17. During 1996, UNHCR will promote and facilitate the voluntary repatriation of 8,000 Guatemalan refugees from Mexico. Under the proposed allocation for Special Programmes of Guatemalan repatriation, expenditures mainly relate to transport, food, domestic needs and documentation of returnees.

18. The proposed allocation for the care and maintenance assistance for Guatemalan refugees located in Chiapas is lower than 1995 owing to the ongoing repatriation movements which have resulted in a decreased caseload. By mid-1996, it is expected that the total number of assisted beneficiaries will decrease to 17,000 persons. During 1996, part of the Guatemalan caseload living in Chiapas will continue to benefit from two programmes focusing on promoting self-sufficiency/income-generation, and training/health and nutrition activities. Training activities will be geared towards the promotion of women's awareness and participation in all aspects of their community activities. The planned project activities are expected to increase the refugees' chances for a successful reinstallation in Guatemala, as well as to increase the self-help capacity of those who have not yet made up their minds to repatriate and who will thus continue to remain in Mexico.

19. During 1996, some 12,250 Guatemalan refugees located in Campeche and Quintana Roo will benefit from UNHCR assistance mainly in terms of pre-school and primary education, transport, access to second and third level Mexican

institutions, health services, credit schemes for agricultural activities, and technical support for livestock programmes. The same beneficiaries will profit during 1996 from an ongoing training programme focusing on the improvement of refugees' occupational skills and enhancing their income-generation capabilities. Efforts will be made to ensure that 50 per cent of the participants are women.

20. During 1996, some 2,700 asylum-seekers and urban refugees from different nationalities will benefit from subsistence allowances to cover temporary lodging and other costs of their installation in Mexico, as well as support in the areas of education, vocational training and counselling. An allocation under General Programmes is also proposed to repatriate up to 150 urban refugees during 1996.

(c) **Implementing partners**

21. COMAR is UNHCR's main implementing partner in the three southern states, coordinating its work with the relevant government institutions at both federal and state levels. The Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social (IMSS) is in charge of health in Chiapas and Campeche, and the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) is in charge of pre-school and primary education in the three states.

22. These institutions are frequently involved in the implementation of UNHCR activities, especially since the signing of the letter of intent on 7 September 1993, and their role is expected to increase during the year.

23. UNHCR implementing partners Centro de Investigaciones y Apoyo a la Mujer (CIAM), Promoción de Servicios Comunitarios AC (PROSECO) and the Centro de Capacitación en Ecologia y Salud para Campesinos AC (CCESC) will continue to participate in health, training and repatriation activities, enhancing the participation of beneficiaries.

24. Since January 1994, assistance to urban refugees has been implemented by a Mexican non-governmental organization (NGO), Centro Mexicano de Ayuda a Refugiados AC (CEMAR). Legal and repatriation assistance to urban refugees are implemented directly by the Regional Office, but with administrative support from CEMAR.

25. Some 5,370 metric tons of basic food supplies were mobilized in 1994 through WFP. These supplies will include a three-month portion of the nine-month reintegration food assistance to be given to all repatriating to Guatemala from the three states. Some 4,000 metric tons will be required for 1995. The third expansion of WFP's project 4163 commenced on 1 March 1995 and covers a twelve-month period only, after which WFP will phase out its contribution. For the 1995 project, WFP has decided to have a new implementing partner, DICONSA, WFP's usual partner in other projects elsewhere in the country.

(d) **Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs**

(i) **1994 expenditure (all sources of funds)**

26. The 1994 expenditure was slightly lower than revised estimates, mainly because political unrest restricted staff travel and fewer office supplies were purchased.

(ii) **Revised 1995 requirements (all source of funds)**

27. The revised 1995 requirements are not significantly different from initial estimates.

(iii) **Initial 1996 requirements (all source of funds)**

28. The proposed 1996 requirements are slightly lower than the 1995 revised estimates.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN MEXICO

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1994	1995		1996	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1994 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
1,858.3 a/	1,790.7	1,823.4	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	1,867.9
116.2	121.8	95.3	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	72.9
2,137.7 b/	1,099.4	1,375.3	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	2,956.4
4.5 c/	–	–	RESETTLEMENT	–
1,917.2	1,960.6	2,060.3	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	1,875.6
6,033.9	**4,972.5**	**5,354.3**	**SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS**	**6,772.8**
354.5	333.5	270.2	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Overview Tables (Part II)	267.4
6,388.4	**5,306.0**	**5,624.5**	**T O T A L (1)**	**7,040.2**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
36.4	46.2	–	EDUCATION ACCOUNT	–
2,048.0	2,791.9	2,500.0	OTHER TRUST FUNDS REPATRIATION/RETURNEE PROGRAMME	2,000.0
2,888.2	2,604.1	2,665.5	CIREFCA/PRODERE	–
16.5	–	–	Various Assistance	–
225.3	276.2	169.0	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	160.8
403.9	273.1	375.0	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT Junior Professional Officer See Overview Tables (Part II)	375.0
5,618.3	**5,991.5**	**5,709.5**	**T O T A L (2)**	**2,535.8**
12,006.7	**11,297.5**	**11,334.0**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**9,576.0**

a/ of which US$ 2,389 incurred against Other Programmes
b/ of which US$ 6,870 incurred against Other Programmes